



ISRAEL'S PREEXISTENT MESSIAH

Robert Leo Odom

Have Moses and the prophets said anything about *ISRAELS PREEXISTENT MESSIAH?*

Or do Israel's later sages say anything about him in the Targums, the talmuds, and the Midrashic Writings?

These and other questions are answered in this book.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AV	=	Authorized Version
BT	=	<i>Babylonian Talmud</i>
B.C.E.	=	Before the Common Era (B.C. = Before Christ)
C.E.	=	The Common Era (A.D. = Year of the Lord).
JT	=	Jerusalem Talmud
MTT	=	<i>Minor Tractates of the Talmud</i>
R.	=	Rabbi.

GOD IN A VACUUM?

A TEAM of astronomers at the University of New Mexico near Albuquerque announced in 1984 that they were mapping what they believed to be the largest known structure in the universe—"a supercluster of galaxies forming a chain 730 million light years long." The Associated Press report in the newspapers quoted one scientist as saying that the discovery "really is kind of mind-boggling."¹

That report was to me a thrilling one. It immediately caused my mind to turn from the social and political upheavals that trouble our little topsy-turvy world known as planet Earth, which travels at an average speed of 18.5 miles every second of its orbital journey of 365.2422 days in a year at an average distance of approximately 93 million miles from the solar orb. I recalled some things I had read in the Holy Scriptures.

When the patriarch Job, who lived about 3600 years ago, contemplated the vastness of God's created universe, he was inspired to say concerning the Lord: "He stretcheth out the north over empty space, and hangeth the earth over nothing.² . . . Lo, these are but the outskirts of His ways; and how small a whisper is heard of Him! But the thunder of His mighty deeds who can understand?"³

In the eighth century B.C.E. the Creator inspired His prophet Isaiah to pen the following words for our world's inhabitants to ponder: "To whom then will ye liken Me, that I should be equal? saith the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high, and see: who hath created these? He that bringeth out their host by number, He calleth them all by name; by the greatness of His might, and for that He is strong in power, not one faileth."⁴

The supercluster of galaxies recently discovered by scientists

is merely a small portion of our vast universe. It is located in the direction of the constellations Pisces and Cetus. And can you imagine what its diameter of "730 million light years from end to end" really is? We have long known that light travels in a vacuum at the rate of 186,230 statute miles per second. Now try to imagine how far light can travel in a year of 365.2422 days. One light year equals 5.88 trillion statute miles! Now multiply that figure by 730 million, and you will get an idea of approximately the diameter of the supercluster of galaxies in the above-mentioned news report. Thus we have in the twentieth century C.E. a better understanding of what our Creator was trying to tell the world by His statements in the books of Job and Isaiah long, long ago.

For example, He asked Job these questions approximately 3600 years ago: "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? Declare, if thou hast the understanding. Who determined the measures thereof, if thou knowest? Or who stretched the line upon it? Whereupon were the foundations thereof fastened? Or who laid the corner-stone thereof, when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?"⁵

Those are also "mind-boggling" questions, and as we ponder them, another important question presents itself. It is this: Did Israel's omniscient, omnipotent, and eternal God exist alone in a vacuum throughout the eternity of the past until He created our little planet Earth approximately 6,000 years ago? That statement in the Book of Job makes it quite clear that the answer to this question is, "No!" The Lord Himself, in that statement to Job, affirms that other living beings were already in existence when He created our world. Note particularly that when the earth was created, "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy."⁵ This indicates that there were other inhabited worlds and other intelligent beings already in existence when planet Earth was created.

Does our Maker tell us more about this in Holy Writ? In the following chapters we shall present some facts that our Creator has revealed for our consideration in seeking light on that question. We must not be so encrusted in prejudice and preconceived

notions that we cannot grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Maker.

However, at the same time we must move with caution, and pray for divine enlightenment and guidance as we seek further knowledge of our Creator and His wonderful works.

The majority opinion among men is not always a safe guide to follow. The Lord has instructed His people: "Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil; neither shalt thou bear witness in a cause to turn aside after a multitude to pervert justice."⁶ Where were the majority in the days of Noah, when the Flood came and blotted out the whole human race except eight persons?

In the time of Elijah it was one man against King Ahab, Queen Jezebel, and 850 false priests and prophets on Mt. Carmel in the northern Kingdom of Israel.⁸

When Israel's 12 spies returned from their mission to spy out the promised Land of Canaan, it was a case of two trusting men against 10 faithless ones.⁹ As a result of choosing to believe the report of the majority in that case, Israel's entrance into the Promised Land was delayed 38 years, and all but two who were 20 years of age or older at the time of the exodus from Egypt perished in the wilderness.

We must always trust in God and prayerfully seek to be guided by true theology and common sense.

Through His prophets the God of Israel has given us the Holy Scriptures to be our guidebook. Each of us ought to say, as did David, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."¹⁰ "Wherewithal shall a young man keep his way pure? By taking heed thereto according to Thy word."¹¹ "Thy word have I laid up in my heart, that I might not sin against Thee."¹²

The long history of Israel, as penned by Moses and the other prophets, has been preserved by the Lord as a lessonbook for the world today. In proportion to their numbers, the Hebrew people are just as divided and confused in religious belief and practice as are the rest of the world. Jew and Gentile alike are descendants of Adam, and are all involved together in the

consequences of the transgression of our first parents. One only needs to read the story of Israel from the time of Moses to the present to become well aware of that fact. Today we have the Orthodox, the Conservative, the Hasidim, the Reconstructionist, the Reform, the Karaite, the Falasha, etc., just as there were Pharisees, Sadducees, Boethusians, Therapeutae, Essenes, etc., in ages past.

Dr. Isidore Epstein, editor of the 36 volumes of the Soncino edition of *The Babylonian Talmud in English*, has said in one of his very informative books: "Of all the parties and sects that existed at the time of the Destruction [of Jerusalem in 70 C.E.], and according to an ancient source there were twenty-four of them, the only one to survive the national cataclysm was the Pharisees."¹³

Furthermore, the American people have been told: "There are no two people who would agree on the precise meaning of the term Judaism."¹⁴

Indeed, Jews, like the Scotch, delight in telling jokes about themselves. We have heard it said many times in good humor: "Get two Jews together and you will get three opinions." A few years ago a Jewish newspaper columnist said in a vein of humor: "Get two Jews together and you will get four opinions!" We like that sort of frank and honest pleasantries. There is, indeed, much truth in the statement cited above from the *American Jewish Year Book*.

In the light of this, each of us needs to read carefully, prayerfully, and honestly the Word of God as it is set forth in the Holy Scriptures, penned by Moses and the other prophets under the inspiration of God for Israel and the rest of mankind.

It is written: "The path of the righteous is as the light of dawn, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."¹⁵ That is true for us individually and collectively. That path is a long one, and also a very safe one to follow. Since the entrance of sin into the heart of man God has shed light upon the path of the faithful throughout the centuries that have followed. The illumination given in the precious promise and prophecy of Genesis 3:15 has been repeatedly reiterated and increased by the writings of the

prophets from Moses to Malachi.

Through the centuries since the exodus of Israel from their enslavement in Egypt and their establishment as a theocracy in the Land of Canaan under the leadership of Joshua, the history of Israel as a people has been a very checkered one—a succession of apostasies and reformations, victories and defeats.

In a time of widespread apostasy in the Kingdom of Judah, and shortly before the destruction of Jerusalem and her magnificent Temple, the prophet Jeremiah was divinely inspired to present this plea to His wayward people: “Thus saith the Lord: Stand ye in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.” It is sad to read that the seer, in recording this for future generations to read, added this short note: “But they said: ‘We will not walk therein.’”¹⁶

Each person endowed with intelligence and power of choice has been confronted with this challenge: “How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him.”¹⁷ While the times and the circumstances are ever changing, the challenge is the same, and God’s plan for humanity will ultimately be realized in the establishment of the royal Messiah and his kingdom of glory on the earth.¹⁸

False prophets have long been and will continue to be aggressively active in trying to defeat our Creator’s purpose for our world and its inhabitants, both Jews and Gentiles.

In every age and in every time of apostasy and defeat there has been a “remnant” of humanity in general, and of Israel in particular standing faithfully for God and His Written Word.¹⁹

During the many centuries since the creation of man the forces of evil have labored ceaselessly to alienate mankind from loyalty to their Creator. While this struggle has been going on, God has repeatedly informed us through His prophets that in due time the Messiah will put an end to this long controversy between good and evil. Through the millenniums a faithful remnant has cherished God’s promise that His Messiah will come with the solution to the problem of sin on our planet.

In this book, *Israel’s Preexistent Messiah*, we present, with

valid documentation, evidence that eminent teachers of long ago in Israel have taught from the Holy Scriptures the doctrine of the preexistent Messiah, and that their teachings concerning it are repeatedly mentioned and set forth in the targums, Talmuds, Midrashic works, and other religious writings of sages of long ago.

Footnotes and References

1. *Tulsa World*, Jan. 26, 1984.
2. Isaac Leeser's rendering is: "He suspended the earth on nothing."
3. Job 26:7, 14.
4. Isa. 40:25, 26.
5. Job 38:4-7.
6. Exodus 23:2.
7. Genesis 6:2-8; 7:7; 9:18.
8. 1 Kings 18:1-40.
9. See Numbers 13 and 14.
10. Psalm 119:105.
11. *Ibid.*, verse 9.
12. *Ibid.*, verse 11.
13. Isidore Epstein, *Judaism: A Historical Presentation*, page 111.
14. *American Jewish Year Book* of 1955, page 99.
15. Proverbs 4:18.
16. Jeremiah 6:16.
17. 1 Kings 18:21.
18. Psalm 37:9-11,20-22,27-29,37,38; Isaiah 65:17-22; 66:22,23; Daniel 2:34,44,45; 7:13,14,18,22,27.
19. Isaiah 1:9; 11:11; Jeremiah 6:9; 23:3; Joel 3:5; Micah 2:12; 7:18; Zephaniah 3:13.

IN GOD'S THOUGHT?

A FEW of Israel's religious teachers of long ago taught that the royal Messiah existed in God's thought *before* our world was created. It appears that some of them preferred this view instead of the one which maintained that the Messiah actually existed in person before the earth was created.

In Midrashic Teaching

For example, we read that "His [God's] throne, is one of the six things that existed in His thought before the creation of the world, namely, the throne of glory, the king Messiah, the Torah, Israel, the sanctuary, and repentance."¹

Did God exist without a real throne of glory, but only one in thought, during the eternity of the past prior to the creation of our world?

In Pesikta Rabbati

A modern reference work informs us that "The conception of the preexistent Messiah is met with in Pesik. R. xxxiii, xxxvi (pp. 152b, 162, ed. Friedmann; comp. Yalk. i. 339)."²

One of these statements is this: "At the very beginning of the creation of the world, the king Messiah had already come into being, for he existed in God's thought even before the world was created."³

Elsewhere that doctrine is presented in this manner: "What is meant by *in Thy light do we see light*? What light is it that the congregation of Israel looks for as from a watchtower? It is the light of the Messiah, of which it is said *And God saw the light that it was good* (Gen. 1:4). This verse proves that the Holy One, blessed be He, contemplated the Messiah and his works

before the world was created, and then under His throne of glory put away His Messiah until the time of the generation in which he will appear.”⁴

Thought-Provoking Questions

In what way does Genesis 1:4 prove that at the time our world was created God “put away His Messiah until the time of the generation in which he will appear”? If the Messiah did not exist in fact before the world was created, how could he be put away at that time and remain hidden until the time when he will appear? It is quite obvious that the statements we have considered raise some serious, thought-provoking questions. Are we to assume, from that statement, that the Messiah began to exist in fact at the time of the creation of the world, and that since then he has been hidden approximately 6,000 years?

It is logical to think that in God’s foreknowledge and planning the creation of our world the Messiah’s role in its future would be foreseen and considered.

In the following chapters we will show that other and different views of Israel’s preexistent Messiah have been cherished and taught among Israel’s teachers since ancient times.

Footnotes and References

1. *The Midrash on Psalms* 93:3, vol. 2, p. 125.
2. *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. 8, p. 511, col. 1, art. “Messiah.”
3. *Pesikta Rabbati*, piska 33, sect. 6 (vol. 2, p. 641).
4. *Ibid.*, piska 36, sect. 1 (vol. 2, p. 677).

PREEXISTENT NAME?

ONE VIEW taught by some men in Israel centuries ago is the doctrine of the preexistence of the Messiah's name, that is, that God chose the name of the Messiah *before* he existed. One ancient work says that God "shall reveal His Messiah, whose name was called from the beginning," etc.¹ It is not clear what that writer meant by the words "from the beginning."

Psalm 72:17 is the Biblical passage most often cited in support of that doctrine; hence, we are told: "The preexistent Messiah is presented also in the Haggadah (Pes. 54a; Ned. 39a; Yalk, i. 20; *et. al.*), where the name of the Messiah is included among the seven things created before the world was made, and where he is called 'Yinnon,' reference being made to Ps. lxxii. 17."²

This notion appears to be an additional idea intended to supplement what is said in the Targum of Palestine on Genesis 4:1, which says concerning Eve that "she said, I have acquired a man, the Angel of the Lord."³

By 2000 Years?

Some teachers in ancient Israel speculated about the time when the name of the Messiah came into God's thought. One rabbinical record taught this view: "Seven things, by two thousand years, preceded the creation of the world: the Torah, the throne of glory, the Garden of Eden, Gehenna, repentance, the sanctuary in heaven, and the name of the Messiah."⁴

Before the World Was Created

"*Before the sun was, his name existed* (Ps. 72:17). Seven things existed before the world was created: the throne of glory, the

name of the Messiah, Torah, Israel, the Garden of Eden, Gehenna, repentance, and the Temple.”⁵

Before the Sun Was Created

In response to the question “What is his [the Messiah’s] name?” a Talmudic tractate says: “The School of R. Yannai said: His name is Yinnon, for it is written, *His name shall endure for ever; e’er the sun was, his name is Yinnon* [Ps. LXXII, 17].”⁶ And here is an interesting comment on that statement: “‘Yinnon’ (Ps. lxxii. 17: ‘before the sun was created his name was’; Sanh. 98b and parallels), imply his origin and pre-existence in heaven.”⁷

Again: “Surely it was taught: Seven things were created before the world was created, and these are they: The Torah, repentance, the Garden of Eden, Gehenna, the Throne of Glory, the Temple, and the name of the Messiah. . . . The name of the Messiah, as it is written, *His* [sc. the Messiah’s] *name shall endure for ever, and has existed before the sun!* [Ps. LXXII, 17.]”⁸

The same doctrine was preserved and taught in other rabbinical works of long ago, writings that are still published and widely circulated. For example, we are told: “Six things preceded the creation of the world: some of them were actually created, while the creation of the others was already contemplated. . . . The name of Messiah was contemplated, for it is written, *His name existeth ere the sun* (Ps. LXXII, 17).”⁹

“The School of R. Jannai said: His name is ‘Yinnon’; for it is written, *E’er the sun was, his name is Yinnon* (Ps. LXXII, 17).”¹⁰

“Thy throne is established of old (Ps. 93:2). This, His throne, is one of the six things that existed in His thought before the creation of the world, namely, the throne of glory, the king Messiah, the Torah, Israel, the sanctuary, and repentance. Of the throne of glory, it is written, *Thy throne is established of old*; of the King Messiah, it is written, *His name shall be continued before the sun* (Ps. 72:17);” etc.”

A Messianic Psalm

Psalm 72 has long been, and still is, regarded by many as a Messianic poem.¹² However, there has been a diversity of interpretations of verse 17 by translators in modern times. One rendering is this: "May his name endure for ever; may his name be continued as long as the sun."¹³

Isaac Leeser's rendering is this: "His name will endure for ever; in the presence of the sun his name shall flourish."¹⁴

Alexander Harkavy's translation reads: "His name shall endure for ever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun."¹⁵

In this particular instance—that is, in Psalm 72:17—linguistic evidence favors the future tense of the verb.

Some modern commentators have gone so far as to deny that Psalm 72 is Messianic.

A Messianic Prophecy

In the second year of Darius I, king of Persia (522-486 B.C.E.), Zechariah the prophet began his ministry for God to the people of Israel. He was given by an angel of God a message of encouragement for Zerubbabel, the first governor of Judea after the expiration of the 70 years of Babylonian captivity. In that message the governor was told: "Who art thou, O great mountain before Zerubbabel? thou shalt become a plain; and he shall bring forth the top stone with shoutings of Grace, grace, unto it."¹⁶

A widely used Jewish reference work informs its readers that "the Targum regards the preexistence of the Messiah's name as implied in . . . Zech. IV. 7," etc.¹⁷

The Targum Jonathan to Zechariah 4:7 states that "He [God] shall reveal His Messiah, whose name was called from the beginning, and he shall have dominion over all the kingdoms."¹⁸

In comment on the statement quoted from *Pesahim* 54a earlier in this chapter concerning the preexistent name of the Messiah, Dr. Joseph Klausner, who wrote much on the Messianic doctrine in ancient Judaism, has aptly remarked: "To conclude from

this passage that the Messiah's name preceded the creation of the world (preexistence) would be senseless. What need would there be for the Messiah's name if the Messiah himself did not yet exist?"¹⁹

That statement by the learned doctor is a thought-provoking one and merits consideration.

Footnotes and References

1. Targum of Jonathan to Zech. 4:7, Levey's translation, p. 98.
2. *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. 8, p. 511, col. 1, art. "Messiah." *The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. 8, p. 629, col. 2, also calls attention to this Talmudic passage.
3. *The Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan Ben Uzziel on the Pentateuch*, translated by J. W. Etheridge, pp. 169, 170.
4. *The Midrash on Psalms* 90. 12, vol. 2, p. 94.
5. *Ibid.*, 72.6, vol. 1, p. 563.
6. BT *Sanhedrin* 98b (p. 667). The same thing is taught in *Midrash Rabbah* to Lamentations 1:16, sect. 51, pp. 137, 138.
7. *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. 10, p. 184, col. 1, art. "Preexistence."
8. BT *Pesahim* 54a, (p. 265). The same thing is said in the tractate BT *Nedarim* 39a (p. 124, 125). See also *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. 8, p. 511, col. 1, art. "Messiah," and *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer*, chap. 3, p. 9.
9. *Midrash Rabbah* to Genesis, chap. 1, sect. 4 (vol. 1, p. 6).
10. *Midrash Rabbah* to Lamentations, chap. 1, sect. 16, part 51 (p. 138). See also *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. 5, p. 214, art. "Eschatology;" *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer*, chap. 3, p. 12.
11. *The Midrash on Psalms* 93:3 (vol. 2, p. 125).
12. See A. Cohen, *The Psalms*, p. 227.
13. Psalm 72:17, Jewish Publication Society of America Version.
14. Psalm 72:17, Isaac Leeser's translation.
15. *Ibid.*, Alexander Harkavy's translation.
16. Zechariah 4:7, JPS.
17. *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. 10, p. 183, col. 2, art. "Preexistence."
18. Samson H. Levey, *The Messiah: An Aramaic Interpretation*, p. 98. See also Raphael Patai, *The Messiah Texts*, p. 41.
19. Joseph Klausner, *The Messianic Idea in Israel*, p. 460. Thirty years previous Dr. Klausner had said: "In Judaism the *name* of the Messiah existed before the creation of the world, even if not the Messiah himself."—*From Jesus to Paul*, p. 478 (Beacon Press, Boston, Mass.: 1961.)

FROM THE DAYS OF ETERNITY

TO MANY faithful sons and daughters of the patriarch Abraham, the first human being referred to as a Hebrew in Israel's Holy Scriptures,¹ the following statement may be surprising: "The Messiah, who is depicted in Daniel 7:13 as a supernatural being, was already in existence before the creation of the world (cf. John 8:58)."²

In a Talmudic tractate of long ago it was taught that nine persons "entered the Garden of Eden alive," one of whom was "the Messiah."³ According to that doctrine, Israel's Messiah himself actually existed in person prior to the creation of the earth. It is logical to believe that as an actually existing celestial person associated with God, the Messiah would have a name and would be also in God's thought during the time of his pre-existence.

At the Beginning of Creation

Dr. Wm. G. Braude, an able Jewish scholar, has pointed out this fact: "The words *I, even I, am He that comforteth you (Isa. 51:12)*, are construed in the light of other verses as intimating that at the very beginning of creation, the King Messiah, God's messenger of comfort, had already come into being."⁴

For example, we find it said: "At the very beginning of the creation of the world, the king Messiah had already come into being, for he existed in God's thought even before the world was created."⁵

Those statements clearly show that some of Israel's teachers have believed and taught that the Messiah existed *before* the world was created.

Dr. Joseph Klausner has correctly said: "*The Messiah existed before the creation of the world*—as in the later Baraitas of

the Talmud (Derekh Erets Zuta, end of Chap. 1) and in the Midrashim.”⁶

A well-known and widely-used Jewish reference work presents to its readers an article entitled “Preexistence.” Of interest to us in particular is section 2, which begins with this statement: “Preexistence of the Messiah: This includes his existence before Creation; the existence of his name; his existence after the creation of the world. Two Biblical passages favor the view of the preexistence of the Messiah: Micah v. 1 (A.V. 2), speaking of the Bethlehemite ruler, says that his ‘goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting’; Dan. vii. 13 speaks of ‘one like the Son of man,’ who ‘came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days.’ ”⁷

In chapter 8 we will consider Daniel 7:13. We now turn our attention to Micah’s prophecy.

The first chapter of the Book of Micah begins with these words of the prophet himself: “The word of the Lord that came to Micah the Morashtite in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem.”⁸ The dates of the reigns of those three kings of Judah are as follows: Jotham, 750 to 731 B.C.E.; Ahaz, 735 to 715 B.C.E.; and Hezekiah, 729 to 686 B.C.E. The overlapping of these reigns is due to the fact that the son began to rule as co-regent with his father some years prior to the latter’s death.

It is obvious from the chronological data given in Micah 1:1 and Isaiah 1:1 that the prophets Isaiah and Micah were contemporaries. This is interesting because the testimony of one agrees with that of the other in affirming the preexistence of the Messiah. That is what we should expect, for it is inconceivable that the God of Israel who speaks through His prophets would contradict Himself by inspiring them to contradict each other.

With this chronological setting of the ministry of Micah as a prophet in the Kingdom of Judah in the latter part of the eighth century and the early part of the seventh century B.C.E. in mind, we now turn to the notable prophecy in Micah 5:1 concerning Israel’s promised Messiah. That prophet made this remarkable statement concerning a small village located approximately five

miles south of Jerusalem: "Thou, Bethlehem Ephrathah, which art little to be among the thousands of Judah, out of thee shall one come forth unto Me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth are from of old, from ancient days."⁹

Let us consider several interesting things in that prophecy.

First, note that Beth-lehem Ephrathah is mentioned as a very small town in the territory allocated to the tribe of Judah. It is first mentioned in Genesis 35:19 as "Ephrath—the same is Beth-lehem," in the time of the patriarch Jacob. Later it became the birthplace of the boy named David, who would become king of Israel (1011 to 971 B.C.E.). Dr. Frants Buhl, Professor of Semitic Philology at the University of Copenhagen, Denmark, has well said: "Micah (v. 1) predicted that Beth-lehem, Ephratah . . . would be the birthplace of a new Messianic David.

"Nothing further is found in the Old Testament concerning this country town, that was probably nothing more than an insignificant village, except that a number of its citizens returned to Judah after the Exile (Ezra ii. 21). . . . But it became of world-historic importance as the traditional birthplace of Jesus, and as such is still the goal of pious pilgrimages."¹⁰

Second, Note especially that God said concerning this small historic town of Beth-lehem: "Out of thee shall one come forth unto Me that is to be ruler in Israel."¹¹

Third, Note also that this divinely appointed future ruler in Israel would be an extraordinary person, one "whose goings forth are from of old, from ancient days."¹²

Other English translations by Jewish scholars render the last clause of Micah 5:1 as follows:

Isaac Leeser: "Whose origin is from olden times, from most ancient days."¹³

Alexander Harkavy: "Whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting."¹⁴

Authorized Version: "His 'goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.' "¹⁵

Dr. Joseph Klausner: " 'Whose origins are from of old, from ancient days.' (5:1). This will be the King Messiah.' "¹⁶

Dr. Samson H. Levey: "Whose goings forth are from of old,

from ancient days.”¹⁷

It is noteworthy that the last clause of Micah 5:1 (AV, V.2) in all of those modern translations into English are substantially in agreement concerning the antiquity of the Messiah’s pre-existence.

It is very important to keep in mind that the prophecy of Micah 5:1 clearly states that the person referred to as coming forth out of Beth-lehem of Judah would not be one whose existence has his beginning at the time when he appears in that city. Indeed not. His existence is definitely said to be “of old, from ancient days.” The first phrase in Hebrew is *mi-qedem*, which is rendered into English as “from of old.” This Hebrew term *qedem* is used in Holy Writ in reference to very ancient persons and things. For instance, we read about “the eternal God” (*Elohei qedem*) in Deuteronomy 33:27. See also Isaiah 45:21; 46:10.

Concerning a certain personage associated with the Deity in the work of creation, we read that he says of himself: “The LORD made me as the beginning of His way, the first of His works of old. I was set up from everlasting [*mi-’olam*], from the beginning, or ever [*mi-qedem*] the earth was.”¹⁸ In Habakkuk the prophet says to God in prayer: “Art not Thou from everlasting [*mi-qedem*] , O LORD my God, my holy One?”¹⁹

In the Targum

The Targum of Jonathan to Micah 5:1 (2) reads: “And thou, O Bethlehem Ephrath, thou who wert too small to be numbered among the thousands of the house of Judah, from thee shall come forth before Me the Messiah, to exercise dominion over Israel, he whose name was mentioned from before, from the days of creation.”²⁰

The Targum makes it appear that Micah 5:1 affirms the pre-existence of the Messiah’s name rather than the Messiah himself, who existed “from the days of creation.” That is not what God’s prophet said to Israel. He has declared in the Hebrew text concerning Bethlehem: “Out of thee to Me he shall come forth to become one ruling in Israel, and his comings forth have been

from of old, from the days of eternity.” (Literal rendering.) Neither the Hebrew text nor any of the English translations of Micah 5:1 use the term “name” in that verse. It is the person himself and not merely his name that is referred to as having such a preexistence.

It is astonishing that so little concerning Micah 5:1 can be found in currently published Jewish literature of the first centuries of the Common Era. We wonder why. This paraphrase, said to have been written in the ninth century C.E., quotes Micah 5:1 and comments on it as follows: “Another verse says: ‘But thou, Beth-lehem Ephrathah, which art to be least among the thousands of Judah, from thee shall he come forth unto me who is to be ruler over Israel; whose ancestry belongs to the *past*, even to the days of old’ (Mic. v. 2). ‘The past,’ whilst as yet the world had not been created.”²¹

The Septuagint (LXX), the Greek translation prepared by a group of 70 learned Jewish scholars at the request and expense of Ptolemy II (Philadelphus) king of Egypt (285-247 B.C.E.), renders the last clause of Micah 5:1 (2) as “from the beginning, even from eternity.”²² The Hebrew text preserved by the people of Israel throughout the centuries literally says: “From the days of eternity.”

The Lord Himself, when speaking to the patriarch Job 4000 years ago, has told us that “the sons of God shouted for joy” when He “laid the foundations of the earth.”²³ We accept that testimony as true and trustworthy. In like manner we ought to accept His word to us through His prophet Micah approximately 2700 years ago, that Israel’s promised Messiah is a being “whose goings forth have been from of old, from the days of eternity.”

Footnotes and References

1. Genesis 14:13
2. *The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. 8, p. 629, col. 2.
3. *The Minor Tractates of the Talmud, Derek Eretz Zuta*, chap. 1, sect. 18, p. 570.
4. *Pesikta Rabbati*, piska 33, Summary (Vol. 2, p. 628).
5. *Ibid.*, piska 33.6 (vol. 2, p. 641).
6. Joseph Klausner, *The Messianic Idea in Israel*, p. 290.

7. *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. 10, p. 183, col. 2, art. "Preexistence."
8. Micah 1:1.
9. Micah 5:1, JPS (1917); AV, V.2.
10. *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. 3, p. 121, col. 2, art. "Beth-lehem-Judah."
11. Micah 5:1 JPS; AV, V.2.
12. *Ibid.*, last clause.
13. Isaac Leeser's translation of Micah 5:1, 1853.
14. Alexander Harkavy's translation of Micah 5:1, 1916.
15. The Authorized Version here referred to is what is commonly called the King James Version, published in England in 1611. It is the version quoted in *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. 10, p. 183, col. 2, published in 1901.
16. Joseph Klausner, *Messianic Idea in Israel*, p. 77 (1955).
17. Samson H. Levey's translation, *The Messiah: An Aramaic Interpretation*, p. 93 (1974).
18. Proverbs 8:22, 23. See also Psalm 90:2.
19. Habakkuk 1:12.
20. Samson H. Levey, p. 93. See also *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, Vol. 10, p. 183, col. 2.
21. Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer, chap. 3, p. 12.
22. Micah 5:2, Septuagint (LXX).
23. Job 38:4, 7.

SCION OF KING DAVID

THE PROPHECIES of the Book of Isaiah must have been very precious and encouraging for the faithful in Israel during the troublous 40 years of that prophet's ministry from 740 to 685 B.C.E. The northern Kingdom of Israel, consisting of the ten tribes which had revolted and turned to the worship of Baal under the leadership of Jereboam I in 931 B.C.E., was completely destroyed by the Assyrian army in 722 B.C.E.

In the meantime the southern Kingdom of Judah had become tributary to the king of Assyria during the reign of King Ahaz (735-715 B.C.E.), who not only heavily taxed the people to pay the exorbitant tribute demanded by the Assyrian monarchs, but also made widespread efforts to make paganism the dominant religion throughout his domain.

In spite of this apostasy and the military invasion by the king of Assyria, King Hezekiah (729-686 B.C.E.) effected a great religious reformation and revival among his people. This would be followed by another long period of widespread apostasy and heathenism in the Kingdom of Judah under the 55-year rule of King Manasseh (696-641 B.C.E.). The prophet Isaiah himself would be sawn asunder by decree of this wicked monarch.

A Message of Hope

With that historical background in mind, the reader of the Book of Isaiah can readily see that his prophecies concerning the distant future of Israel in particular, and the world in general, must have been greatly appreciated and often read by the faithful minority remnant among God's people in that dark period.

For example, the 11th chapter of the Book of Isaiah contains this remarkable prophecy: "There shall come forth a shoot out of the stock of Jesse, and a twig shall grow forth out of his

roots.’” Also: “It shall come to pass in that day, that the root of Jesse, that standeth for an ensign of the peoples, unto him shall the nations seek; and his resting-place shall be glorious.”²

That prophecy was uttered by Isaiah in the reign of King Hezekiah more than two and a half centuries after the reign of King David (1011-971 B.C.E.), son of Jesse in the little village of Bethlehem. In Isaiah’s time its fulfillment was still future. The original promise had been given to King David by the prophet Nathan.³ In response, the grateful monarch said in a prayer of thanksgiving to the Lord: “Thou hast spoken also of Thy servant’s house for a *great while to come*.”⁴ Another version renders it thus: “Thou hast spoken also of thy servant’s house for a *distant time*.”⁵

Who is the person referred to in Isaiah 11:1, 10 as a “shoot out of the stock of Jesse, and a twig . . . out of his roots”? Some of Israel’s teachers have assumed that he was King Hezekiah, a descendant of David and ruler over the Kingdom of Judah in Isaiah’s time. Others have taught that the person referred to as “shoot” and “twig” would be Israel’s promised Messiah, who would reign eternally over the faithful in the better world to come.

Dr. Joseph Klausner, who is quite liberal in his thinking on the subject, has asked concerning “the superb prophecies” of Isaiah 9:5 and 11:1: “Is it possible to consider all these prophecies Messianic? Most modern scholars answer this question *in the affirmative*; and in my opinion, correctly.”⁶

The Jewish Encyclopedia likewise tells its readers: “Isaiah the prophet connects with ‘the stem of Jesse’ (Isa. xi. i) and ‘root of Jesse’ (*ib.* xi. 10) one of his sublimest Messianic prophecies.”⁷

In the Targum

Turning back through the centuries we find in the Targum of Jonathan to Isaiah 11:1 this interpretation: “And a king shall come forth from the sons of Jesse, and the Messiah shall be anointed from among his children’s children.”⁸ Another

translation of that same Targum reads: "And a king shall come forth from the sons of Jesse, and an Anointed One (or, *Messiah*) from his sons' sons shall grow up."⁹

Verse 6 is interpreted by the targumist in this manner: "In the days of Israel's Messiah, peace shall abound in the land," etc.¹⁰ Another rendering of that Targum reads: "In the days of the Anointed One (or, *Messiah*) of Israel peace shall be multiplied in the land," etc.¹¹

In the Talmud

In Isaiah 11:2 it was foretold that upon the scion of Jesse the Spirit of the Lord would rest and bestow upon him six special gifts. In naming six descendants of King David through Ruth the Moabitess, a Talmudic tractate identifies one of them as the "Messiah," and adds: "The Messiah—as it is written, *And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge of the fear of the Lord. And shall make him of quick understanding [wa-hariho] in the fear of the Lord.* R. Alexandri said: This teaches that he loaded him with good deeds and suffering as a mill [is laden]."¹²

Also it is said that assurance was given that from Ruth would come the Messiah, and this evidence was cited: "The Messiah, as it is said, *And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding,* etc. (Isa. xi. 2)."¹³

The same thing is said in the Targum of Jonathan to Ruth.¹⁴

In the Midrash Rabbah

In like manner, we are told in other rabbinic works of long ago that Isaiah 11 contains a prophecy concerning Israel's promised Messiah. In a well known Jewish reference work of our own time we read: "The 'Spirit of God' which 'moved upon the face of the waters' (Gen. 1. 2) is the spirit of the Messiah (Gen. R. viii. 1; comp. Pesik. R. 152b, which reads as follows, alluding to Isa. xi. 2: 'The Messiah was born [created]'¹⁵ when the world was made, although his existence had been

contemplated before the creation’).’’¹⁶

Note that according to that statement the “Spirit of God” who “moved upon the face of the waters” when our world was created, as stated in Genesis 1:2, is declared to be “the spirit of the Messiah.” Furthermore, it also states that “the Messiah was born [created],¹⁵ when the world was made,” showing his existence had been contemplated before the creation.¹⁷

Note also that it identifies “the spirit of God” mentioned in Genesis 1:2 and “the spirit of the Messiah.” Too, it implies that the Messiah existed at the time the world was created. Moreover, in doing so it implies the deity of the Messiah by equating him with “God” and “Lord .”

“In the opinion of Resh Lakish [that is the meaning], since it is said, *And the Spirit of God hovered over the face of the waters* (Gen. 1:2), i.e., the spirit of the Messianic King.’’¹⁸ That is a logical conclusion because the King Messiah existed at the time of the creation of our planet Earth.

The King Messiah

Dr. Joseph Klausner makes this remarkable comment: “What I have said about this prophecy [of Isaiah 9] we must also say about the exalted portrayal of the personal Messiah found in Chapter 11. This is the most exalted portrayal of the personal Messiah which we have in the books of the prophets. Isaiah’s Messiah is actually *the supreme man*, politically and spiritually, physically and ethically, alike.’’¹⁹

The following rabbinical statements clearly show that among Israel’s teachers of long ago it was taught that the scion of King David, as foretold in Isaiah 11, was Israel’s promised Messiah, and that he had existed since before the creation of our world.

“It is said of the Messiah, ‘But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the land; and he shall smite the land with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked’ (Isa. 11:4).’’²⁰

In several other midrashic statements the prophecy of Isaiah 11 is definitely and specifically applied to the Messiah.²¹

One Talmudic tractate quotes a rabbinical statement saying: “ ‘*There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse*’ meaning, that the birth of a Messiah of the line of David shall make up for the destruction of the Temple).”²²

Genesis 1:2 and Isaiah 11:2

It is interesting to note that Genesis 1:2 and Isaiah 11:2 were linked together in the thinking of some of Israel’s religious teachers of long ago. Here is a thought-provoking example: “AND THE SPIRIT OF GOD HOVERED: this alludes to the spirit of Messiah, as you read, *And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him* (Isa. XI, 2).”²³ This identification of “the Spirit of God” with “the spirit of the Messiah” appears to recognize the deity of the Messiah as one of the *Elohim* who did the work of creation.

“Where is the proof that the king Messiah existed from the beginning of God’s creation of the world? The proof is in the verse *And the spirit of God moved*, words which identify the king Messiah, of whom it is said ‘And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him’ (Isa. 11:2).”²⁴

Another interesting example of Jewish teaching concerning the preexistence of the Messiah is this: “You find that at the very beginning of the creation of the world, the king Messiah had already come into being, for he existed in God’s thought even before the world was created. Of his existence Scripture says, *And there came forth a shoot out of the stock of Jesse* (Isa. 11:1); it does not say ‘*And there shall come forth*’ [but *And there came forth*], implying that the shoot out of the stock of Jesse had already come forth.”²⁵

In this instance the interpreter of Isaiah 11:1, which is generally regarded as a prophecy concerning the Messiah as a scion of Jesse the father of King David, regarded the Hebrew verb *weyatsa’* as the kal preterite form of *yitsa’*, which it really is. But our translators have rendered it as a waw conversive, and our English translators make it a future tense in meaning. This appears to be a correct rendering.

As a descendant of Jesse, whose son he was, David had ruled as king of Israel from 1011 to 971 B.C.E.—that is, about two and a half centuries before Isaiah penned that prophecy about the Messiah. If the Messiah is nothing more than a mere human being, born as a descendant of Jesse and his son King David, he could not have existed “at the very beginning of the creation of the world,” as stated above in the extract from the *Pesikta Rabbati* and in other rabbinical writings of old.

However, if the Messiah existed prior to the creation of our world, then his birth as a scion of King David would be one of incarnation in human form by a miracle of God. Piska 33 does not reveal just *how* the Messiah, as a being having existed before the world was created, would become a scion of Jesse and his son King David.

Footnotes and References

1. Isaiah 11:1.
2. *Ibid.*, verse 10.
3. 2 Samuel 7:11,16,18,19,27,29; 1 Chronicles 17: 10-12,23-27.
4. 2 Samuel 7:19, JPS version.
5. *Ibid.*, Isaac Leiser's translation.
6. Joseph Klausner, *The Messianic Idea in Israel*, pp. 56, 57.
7. *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. 7, p. 158, col. 2, art. “Jesse.”
8. *Targum of Jonathan* to Isaiah 11:1, Levey's translation, p. 49.
9. *Ibid.*, Stenning's translation, p. 40.
10. Isaiah 11:6, Levey, p. 50.
11. *Ibid.*, Stenning, p. 40.
12. BT *Sanhedrin*, 93B, pp. 626, 627.
13. *Midrash Rabbah* on Ruth, chap. 7, sect. 2, p. 83.
14. *Targum of Jonathan* to Ruth, Levey's translation, p. 134.
15. See Appendix, Question 2.
16. *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. 10, p. 183, col. 2.
Concerning the concept of the Messiah as a person “born” or “created” see Question No. 2 on page 60 of “Questions and Answers” in the Appendix to this book.
17. The bracketed words are those of the editor of the *Jewish Encyclopedia*.
18. *The Midrash Rabbah* on Leviticus, 14:1, p. 178.
19. Joseph Klausner, *The Messianic Idea in Israel*, p. 65.
20. *The Midrash on Psalms*, 2.3 (vol. 1, p. 561).
21. *Ibid.*, pp. 37, 293, 295, 516, 560. See also *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer*, p. 19.

22. JT *Berakoth*, chap. 2, sect. 3. See also *Midrash Rabbah* on Lamentations, chap. 1, sect. 16, par. 51 (pp. 136, 137).
23. *The Midrash Rabbah* on Genesis, chap. 2, sect. 4 (vol. 1, p. 17).
24. *Pesikta Rabbati*. piska 33.6 (vol. 2, pp. 642, 643).
25. *Ibid.*, p. 641.

ISRAEL'S WONDERFUL MESSIAH

ONE OF the most thought-provoking statements found in the writings of ancient Israel's prophets was penned by Isaiah in the latter part of the eighth century B.C.E. In a well-known Jewish translation of that prophecy into English in 1917, it reads: "For a child is born unto us, a son is given unto us; and the government is upon his shoulder; and his name is called Pele-joez-el-gibbor-abi-ad-sar-shalom; that the government may be increased, and of peace there be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it through justice and through righteousness from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts doth perform this."¹

The reader of that rendering of verse 5 is puzzled, wondering why the translator preferred to transliterate that royal son's name instead of translating it into English. Also in a Midrashic statement verse 5 is left untranslated without explaining why.²

In the translation of verse 5 in his English version of 1853, Isaac Leeser renders that passage as follows: "For a child is born unto us, a son hath been given unto us, and the government is placed on his shoulders; and his name is called, Wonderful, counsellor of the Mighty God, of the Everlasting Father, the prince of peace."³

In the English text prepared by Alexander Harkavy in 1916 that verse reads: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government is upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, counsellor of the mighty God, of the everlasting Father, prince of peace."⁴

The Hebrew text literally translated reads: "For a child is born to us; a son is given to us; and is the government on His shoulder; and is called His name Wonderful, counsellor, the God Mighty, Everlasting Father, Prince of peace."

A modern Jewish evaluation of that remarkable Scripture passage is this: "The idea of a personal Messiah runs through the Old Testament. It is the natural outcome of the prophetic future hope. The first prophet to give a detailed picture of the future ideal king was Isaiah (ix. 1-6, xi. 1-10, xxxii. 1-5)."⁵

In the Targum

Centuries ago the Targum of Jonathan to that passage in Isaiah rendered it as follows: "Said the prophet to the house of David: For to us a Son is born; to us a Son is given; and He shall receive the Law upon Him to keep it; and His name is called from of old, Wonderful, Counsellor, Eloha the Mighty, Abiding to Eternity, the Messiah, because peace shall be multiplied upon us in His days."^{6,7}

Another English version of the Targum reads: "The prophet saith to the house of David, A child has been born to us, a son has been given to us; and he has taken the law upon himself to keep it, and his name has been called from of old, Wonderful counsellor, Mighty God, He who lives for ever, the Anointed one (or, *Messiah*), in whose days peace shall increase upon us."⁸

In the Talmud

A Talmudic tractate identifies the person referred to as follows: "R. Jose the Galilean said: Even the name of the Messiah is called 'peace,' [as it is stated,] And his name is called . . . Abi-ad-sar-shalom."⁹ The footnote to that statement is: "Isa. ix. 5, i.e., 'the Everlasting Father, the Ruler of peace.'"¹⁰

Another Talmudic tractate applies that prophecy to Hezekiah in this manner: "The Holy One, blessed be He, said: Let Hezekiah who hath eight [*shemoneh*] names, come and mete out punishment to Sennacherib, who hath [likewise] eight. Hezekiah, as it is written, *For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called* [i] *Wonderful*, [ii] *Counsellor*, [iii] *Mighty*, [iv]

Judge, [v] Everlasting, [vi] Father, [vii] Prince, and [viii] Peace."¹¹

That Talmudic expositor does not explain how or why King Hezekiah could or should be called "Everlasting." In Holy Writ there are two obituary notices telling us that "Hezekiah slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the ascent of the sepulchers of the sons of David; and all Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem did him honor at his death."¹² That occurred in 686 B.C.E.

This leaves us no alternative but to accept the interpretation that the person referred to here in verse 5 as "Everlasting" is not the dead King Hezekiah, but is a king "who lives forever," as the targumist quoted above has expressed it.

In the Midrash Rabbah

A Midrashic work interprets Isaiah's statement to mean that God said: " 'I have yet to raise up the Messiah,' of whom it is written, *For a child is born to us* (Isa. ix. 5). "¹³

Dr. Joseph Klausner's conclusion concerning Isaiah 9:5, 6 is not only correct but also surprising: "I, along with most modern scholars, consider this whole prophecy Messianic."¹⁴

In a scholarly Jewish work of modern times this remarkable comment is made concerning Isaiah 9:1-7: "A deliverer already exists in the counsels of God, and he will restore the kingdom of David in an idealized form (ix. 1-7)."¹⁵

That statement aptly emphasizes the fact of the preexistence of Israel's promised Messiah and also that he would restore in the future the kingdom of David.

Why Not Hezekiah?

Hezekiah, who reigned over the Kingdom of Judah from 729 to 686 B.C.E., could not and did not fulfill the Messianic prophecy of Isaiah 9:5, 6. His dominion did not extend beyond the boundaries of Palestine. The Messiah's kingdom would not be established upon earth until long afterwards. Later prophets spoke of the royal Messiah and the establishment of his kingdom

upon the earth as an event still future.

In the prophecy of Daniel 7, given in the first year of Belshazzar, king of Babylon (553-539 B.C.E.)—nearly 150 years after king Hezekiah's death—it is declared by God's seer that the establishment of the Messianic kingdom was still to be accomplished in the far distant future. Furthermore, the seer was shown that "There was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that *all the peoples, nations, and languages should serve him*; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."¹⁶

That means that the whole world—Asia, Africa, Europe, Australia, North and South America, and all the islands of the sea would be under the dominion of the royal Messiah. No such thing took place in the reign of King Hezekiah in the seventh century B.C.E., nor since his time to the present. It is all still future.

In the light of this, the following Talmudic statement is an interesting one: "R. Hillel said: There shall be no Messiah for Israel, because they have already enjoyed him in the days of Hezekiah. R. Joseph said: May God forgive him [for saying so]. Now, when did Hezekiah flourish? During the first Temple. Yet Zechariah, prophesying in the days of the second, proclaimed, *Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold thy king cometh unto thee! he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass [Zech. IX. 9].*"¹⁷

"Given to Us"

Note also in Isaiah 9:5 that the promised son "is given to us." That son is not a gift promised merely to one king or to one other human being exclusively, but the Messiah is a gift of God "to us"—to us, all Jews and Gentiles who faithfully love and serve the God of Israel. It reminds us of God's love for the whole human race as He stated it to Abraham and his heirs: "In thy seed shall *all the nations of the earth be blessed.*"¹⁸ The bles-

sings which God bestowed upon Abraham and his descendants were intended to be shared with all the rest of the world. God's great plan for Israel was a part of His much bigger plan for the whole human race.¹⁹

Footnotes and References

1. Isaiah 9:5, 6, JPS version.
2. *Midrash Raddah* to Numbers, chap. 2, sect. 10 (vol. 1, p. 40).
3. Isaiah 9:5, Isaac Leiser's version.
4. *Ibid.*, Alexander Harkavy's translation.
5. *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. 8, p. 506, col. 1, art., "Messiah."
6. *Targum of Jonathan* to Isaiah 9:6, as translated by J.W. Etheridge, *The Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan Ben Uzziel on the Pentateuch*, Vol. 1, "Introduction," p. 27.
7. Surprising is the English rendering of verse 5 by Dr. Samson Levey, which reads as follows: "For to us a child has been born, a son has been given to us; and the government shall be upon his shoulder. The wonderful counsellor, the Mighty God, the Eternal Father, has called his name 'Prince of Peace.'"—page 45.
Equally surprising is his rendering of the Targum to that passage, as follows: "The prophet announced to the house of David that: 'A boy has been born unto us, a son has been given unto us, who has taken the Torah upon himself to guard it; and his name has been called by the One who gives wonderful counsel, the Mighty God, He who lives forever: "Messiah," in whose day peace shall abound for us.'"—Samson H. Levey, p. 45.
His English rendering of verse 5 neither agrees with the currently used Hebrew text, nor with that in *The Dead Sea Scrolls of St. Mark's Monastery*, vol. 1, Plate VIII, edited by Millar Burrows (pub. by The American Schools of Oriental Research, New Haven; 1950).
His English rendering of it does not agree with the Aramaic text of the Targum to Isaiah.
8. Targum to Isaiah 9:5, 6, J.F. Stenning's translation, p. 32.
9. MTT *Perek Hashalom* 59b, 11 (vol. 2, p. 600).
R. Jose the Galilean was a tanna of the first and second centuries C.E., and therefore a contemporary of R. Akiba.
10. *Ibid.*
11. BT *Sanhedrin* 94a, p. 632. In a footnote to the *Midrash Rabbah* to Numbers a modern writer applies verse 5 to both King Hezekiah and to the King Messiah. See Chap. 2, sect. 10 (vol. 1, p. 40).
12. 2 Chronicles 32:33. See also 2 Kings 20:20, 21.
13. *Midrash Rabbah* to Deuteronomy 1. 20 (p. 22).
14. Joseph Klausner, *Messianic Idea in Israel*, p. 64.
15. *The Jewish Encyclopedia* vol. 6, p. 638, col. 2.
16. Daniel 7:14.

17. BT *Sanhedrin*, 99a, p. 669.
18. Genesis 22:18, 26:4, 28:14.
19. See also 1 Kings 8:41-43; 2 Chronicles 6:32, 33; Isaiah 56:1-7.

“THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS”

IN THE thirteenth year of the reign of Josiah, king of Judah (626 B.C.E.), the Lord God of Israel began to use the voice and pen of the prophet Jeremiah in giving messages of counsel and warning to many individuals and nations. In his lifetime the Kingdom of Judah and the City of Jerusalem, including the Temple, were destroyed by the Babylonian armies. During the 40 years of Jeremiah's prophetic ministry the Lord sent by him messages of warning, comfort, and hope to His faithful ones scattered abroad in those troublous times. One of those precious promises contained this remarkable prophecy:

“Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous shoot, and he shall reign as king and prosper, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely; and this is his name whereby he shall be called, The LORD is our righteousness.”¹

A modern Jewish reference work comments on that passage of Holy Scripture as follows: “The Messiah will be ‘a righteous sprout of David,’ who will establish just judgment and wise government in the country, and whose name will be *YHWH tsdqu* (= ‘God is our salvation’; xxiii. 5, 6),” etc.²

The verb “is” does not appear in that name in the Hebrew text, and rightly so because God is speaking of a particular person who would be a descendant—a scion—of King David, as we have already noted in Chapter 4 of this book.

Through His prophet Nathan the Lord had revealed to David, king of Israel (1011-971 B.C.E.), that in the distant future one of his male descendants would “build an house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever.”³

In grateful response to the Lord, King David said in prayer:

“Thou hast spoken also of Thy servant’s house for a *great while to come*.”⁴ During the centuries thereafter prophet after prophet sent by God reminded His people of that wonderful promise that ultimately a scion of King David would rule over God’s people for ever. The reign of that future king of divine appointment would not begin until after the resurrection of the righteous dead and the destruction of the nations existing in this present sinful world.⁵

Keep in mind that the scion of David, as mentioned in Jeremiah’s prophecy, is referred to as “the LORD Our Righteousness.” Very interesting, too, is the fact that the Tetragrammaton (YHWH) is the term here rendered as “LORD” in Jeremiah 23:6, as quoted above.

Isaac Leeser’s version reads: “Behold, days are coming, saith the Lord, when I will raise up unto David a righteous sprout, and he shall reign as king, and prosper, and he shall execute justice and righteousness on the earth. In his days shall Judah be helped, and Israel shall dwell in safety: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, The Lord is our righteousness.”⁶

Alexander Harkavy’s translation is: “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous sprout, and he shall reign as king and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, The Lord is our righteousness.”⁷

It is obvious that this prophecy speaks of Israel’s promised Messiah, for it refers to him as “a righteous shoot” or “Branch” from King David, as previously foretold in Isaiah 11:1, 10. It predicted that in the future “he shall reign as king and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth.”

In the Targum

The Targum of Jonathan to Jeremiah 23:5, 6 explains it thus: “ ‘Behold, days are coming,’ says the Lord, ‘when I will raise up for David a righteous Messiah, and he shall reign as king, and prosper, and shall enact a righteous and meritorious law

has been enshrined in the Babylonian Talmud for the benefit of future generations. This prophecy of Jeremiah makes it very clear that the royal Messiah, the long-awaited and divinely appointed scion of King David, will ultimately reign as king over the faithful forever. Noteworthy, too, is the fact that the Messiah is here called "The LORD [YHWH] Our Righteousness."

Another Talmudic statement shows how precious that prophecy of Jeremiah 23:5,6 was to the faithful in Israel during the troublous times after it was penned:

" 'Gladden us, O Lord our God, with Elijah¹² the prophet, Thy servant, and with the kingdom of the house of David, Thine anointed. Soon may he come and rejoice our hearts. Suffer not a stranger to sit upon his throne, nor let others any longer inherit his glory; for by Thy holy name Thou didst swear unto him, that his light should not be quenched for ever. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely; and this is his name whereby he shall be called: The Lord is our righteousness. [Jer. 23:6.] Blessed art Thou, O Lord, Who causeth the horn of salvation to flourish for Thy people Israel.' " ¹³

That Talmudic passage concerning the promise of the coming of the King Messiah as the scion of King David to establish his kingdom on earth, is an interesting one, because it refers to "Elijah the prophet." In Malachi 3:23 (4:5 A.V.) God said: "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord. And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers; lest I come and smite the land with utter destruction." ¹⁴

In the Midrashic Writings

The following statements show how the Messianic prophecy of Jeremiah 23:5,6 has been cherished and preserved during the many centuries that have passed since his time down to our own:

"What is the name of King Messiah? R. Abba b. Kahana said: His name is 'the Lord'; as it is stated, *And this is the name*

whereby he shall be called, The Lord is our righteousness (Jer. XXIII, 6). For R. Levi said: It is good for a province when its name is identical with that of its king, and the name of its king identical with that of its God. 'It is good for a province when its name is identical with that of its king,' as it is written, *And the name of the city from that day shall be the Lord is there* (Ezek. XLVIII, 35). 'And the name of its king identical with that of its God' as it is stated, *'And this is the name whereby he shall be called, The Lord is our righteousness.'* ¹⁵

The fact that through ancient Israel's great seer Jeremiah, God Himself referred to the Messiah as "The LORD (YHWH)" is so noteworthy that a well known and widely used Jewish reference work of our time calls the attention of its readers to it. In listing several titles given to the Messiah in Holy Writ, including "the Eternal" (Jer. 23:6) and "Yinnon" (Ps. 72:17), it says that they "imply his origin and preexistence in heaven. He therefore stands higher than the ministering angels (Yalk. ii. 476), and he lives throughout eternity."¹⁶

Another ancient Midrashic work states: "God will call the king Messiah after His own name, for it is said of the king Messiah *This is his name whereby he shall be called: The Lord our righteousness* (Jer. 23:6)."¹⁷

The Promise Repeated

During the 70 years of Babylonian exile and the troublous centuries which followed thereafter for the people of Israel, the promise concerning the scion ("Branch" or "Shoot") of King David was repeated by the Lord and cherished by the faithful as it was reiterated from time to time. For example, the Targum of Jonathan to Jer. 33:15 interprets God's promise there in this way: "I will raise up for David a righteous Messiah, who shall enact a righteous and meritorious law in the land."¹⁸ Note that the Targum has used the word "Messiah" instead of "Branch" or "Shoot."

When the returned exiles were laboring to rebuild and restore Jerusalem in the reign of Darius I, king of Persia (522-486

B.C.E.), they encountered much opposition from their enemies. In Zechariah 3:8 God repeated His promise concerning the scion of King David. In the Targum of Jonathan to that verse it is said: "Behold, I bring My servant, the Messiah, who is to be revealed."¹⁹

Again, that promise is stated in Zechariah 6:12 concerning the "man whose name is the Shoot." The Targum of Jonathan interpreted that phrase to mean: "The man whose name is 'The Messiah.'"²⁰ A modern reference work correctly notes that the prophet Zechariah "reiterates the promise of the Messiah (vi. 9-15)."²¹

Elsewhere it is said: "The double *zade* is hinted at in the verse, *Behold, a man whose name is the shoot (zemah), and who shall shoot up (yizmah), etc. (Zech. VI, 12). This refers to the Messiah, of whom it also says, I will raise unto David a righteous shoot (zemah zaddik), and he shall reign as king and prosper, and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land (Jer. 23:5).*"²²

These various statements concerning Israel's promised Messiah clearly show that the preexistent Messiah had not yet established his kingdom upon earth when the sages of the targum, the Talmuds, and the Midrashic works wrote.

Too, this makes it very clear that King Hezekiah was not the promised royal Messiah mentioned in Isaiah 7:14; 9:5,6; 11:1-10; Jeremiah 23:5,6; 33:15; and Zechariah 6:12. The reign of the King Messiah, a far greater monarch than was King Hezekiah of ancient Israel, is still future, as foretold in Daniel 2:44; 7:14,27; Ezekiel 37.

We, in this 20th century C.E., when the world is about to experience a "time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation, even to that same time,"²³ must believe and cherish the precious Messianic hope that the God of Israel has repeatedly set forth in the Holy Scriptures. Let there be no time-setting for that great event to happen, but let us live each day by God's grace and help, as we would like it to be if it were our last in this present world.

Footnotes and References

1. Jeremiah 23:5,6, JPS version.
2. The Jewish Encyclopedia, vol. 8, p. 506, col. 2.
3. 2 Samuel 7:13.
4. *Ibid.*, v. 19.
5. See Ezekiel 37:12-25; Daniel 2:44,45; 7:13,14,18,27.
6. Jeremiah 23:5,6, Isaac Leeser's Translation.
7. *Ibid.*, Alexander Harkavy's Translation.
8. *Ibid.*, Targum of Jonathan, Levey's Translation, pp. 68, 69.
9. *Ibid.*, The author's translation.
10. *Ibid.*, J.W. Etheridge's translation, "Introduction," pp. 28, 29.
11. BT *Baba Bathra*, 75b (p. 303).
12. See *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. 5, p. 122, col. 1.
13. BT MTT *Soferim*, 40b, pp. 274, 275.
14. Malachi 3:23 (4:5).
15. *The Midrash Rabbah* to Lamentations I.16 sect. 51 (pp. 135, 136).
16. *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. 10, p. 184, col. 1, art. "Preexistence."
17. *The Midrash on Psalms* 21.2, (vol. 1, p. 294).
18. Jeremiah 33:15, Levey's Translation, p. 74.
19. Targum of Jonathan to Zechariah 3:8, Levey's Translation, p. 97.
20. Targum of Jonathan to Zechariah 6:12, Levey's Translation, p. 99.
21. *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. 12, p. 646, col. 1, art. "Zechariah, Book of."
22. *Midrash Rabbah* on Numbers, Chap. 18, sect. 21 (vol. 2, page 734).
23. Daniel 12:1.

“ONE LIKE UNTO A SON OF MAN”

IN MANY Jewish reference works and prayer books belief in a Messiah is set forth in article no. 12 of the oft-recited “Thirteen Principles of the Faith” as follows: “I believe with perfect faith in the coming of the Messiah, and, though he tarry, I will wait daily for his coming.” But not so well known today is the fact of Jewish belief in a preexistent Messiah.

For example, one widely used reference work states that: “Two Biblical passages favor the view of the preexistence of the Messiah: Micah v. 1 (A. V. 2), speaking of the Bethlehemite ruler, says that his ‘goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting’; Dan. vii. 13 speaks of ‘one like the Son of man,’ who ‘came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days.’ ”

Daniel’s Prophecy

The second passage of Holy Scripture referred to above is that penned by Daniel the seer in the sixth century B.C.E., which says: “I beheld till thrones were placed, and One that was ancient of days did sit: His raiment was as white snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames, and the wheels thereof burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him; thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him; the judgment was set, and the books were opened. . . .

“I saw in the night visions, and, behold, there came with the clouds of heaven one like unto a son of man, and he came even to the Ancient of days, and he was brought near before Him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass

away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.”²

Two Thrones

Note particularly that the seer has described in those verses of Holy Writ the great heavenly tribunal in which God Himself, depicted as “the Ancient of days,” sits as supreme Judge when “the judgment was set, and the books were opened.” Note, too, that He is there pictured as sitting on a throne. Another great person depicted as “one like unto a son of man” is escorted to the heavenly tribunal and brought near before the Ancient of days. The word “thrones” (a plural noun) indicates at least two royal seats. The words “His throne” in the latter part of verse 9 implies that the Ancient of days “did sit” on one throne. Thus the reader is left with the conclusion that the other distinguished person, the “one like unto a son of man,” sat on the other throne.

Dr. Judah J. Slotki, an able Jewish scholar, has aptly commented on verse 9: “Some hold that there were only two thrones, one for God and the other for the Messiah.”³

In Midrashic Teaching

It is noteworthy also that Jewish religious teachers of long ago interpreted the words “one like unto a son of man” as referring to Israel’s Messiah. For example, it is recorded:

“In the decree of the Writings it is written, *The Lord said unto my lord: ‘Sit thou at My right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool’* (Ps. 110:1), and it is also written *I saw in the night visions, and, behold, there came with the clouds of heaven one like unto a son of man, and he came even to the Ancient of days, and he was brought near before Him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations, and languages should serve him* (Dan. 7:13,14).

“In another comment, the verse is read *I will tell of the decree: The Lord said unto me: Thou art My son . . . Ask of Me, and I will give the nations for thine inheritance, and the ends of the*

earth for thy possession (Ps. 2:7,8). R. Yudan said: All these goodly promises are in the decree of the King, the King of kings, who will fulfill them for the lord Messiah.”⁴

Also: “R. Berechiah said in the name of R. Samuel: One verse reads of the king Messiah that *One, like the son of man . . . came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before Him* (Dan. 7:13).”⁵

Certain things set forth in that prophecy of Daniel 7:9,13,14 attracted the attention of some of Israel’s sages of centuries past. They are these facts:

First, it is said that “thrones” (plural) were placed, which implies that more than one celestial person of high rank and authority would occupy them.

Second, the celestial person described as “one like unto a son of man” and generally understood to be the Messiah, is the only such being ushered with great pomp into the presence of the Ancient of days and placed near Him to participate in the judgment.

Third, the Messiah is there depicted as coming “with the clouds of heaven . . . to the Ancient of days,” *before* he is given his everlasting dominion as King over all the earth.⁶

R. Akiba’s View

In reference to early rabbinical writings, it is said: “The pre-existence of the Messiah in heaven and his high station there are often mentioned. Akiba interprets Dan. vii, 9 as referring to two heavenly thrones—the one occupied by God, and the other by the Messiah,” etc.⁷

The following story is told about R. Akiba: R. Johanan had been discussing with some Minim (Jews accused of heresy) certain Bible passages in which the Hebrew words used in reference to the Deity are plural in number. Last of all was the one which says: “*Till thrones were placed and one that was ancient did sit.* [Dan. VII, 9.]

“Why were these [plural forms] necessary?—To teach R. Johanan’s dictum; viz.: The Holy One, blessed be He, does

nothing without consulting His heavenly Court, for it is written, *The matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the sentence by the word of the Holy Ones* [Dan. IV, 14]. Now, that is satisfactory for all [the other verses], but how explain *Till thrones were placed?*—One [throne] was for Himself and one for David. Even as it has been taught: One was for Himself and one for David: this is R. Akiba's view. R. Jose protested to him: Akiba, how long wilt thou profane the *Shechinah*? Rather, one [throne] for justice, and the other for mercy. Did he accept [this answer] from him or not?—Come and hear! For it has been taught: One is for justice and the other for charity; This is R. Akiba's view. Said R. Eleazar b. Azariah⁸ to him: Akiba, what hast thou to do with *Aggada*? Confine thyself to [the study of] *Nega'im* and *Ohaloth*.⁹

In another tractate it is stated more clearly that Akiba was told: "Turn to [the laws concerning defilement through] leprosy-signs and tent coverings!"¹⁰

An editorial footnote comments that R. Akiba was so harshly chided for his interpretation "in that it tended to obscure the true monotheistic concept of God."¹¹

Thus some rabbis opposing the *Minim* argued that the singular verb "did sit" indicates that only one divine person is referred to. But the rejoinder of the *Minim* was this: "One [throne] was for Himself and one for David." That is, those dissenters maintained that one of the "thrones" mentioned in Daniel 7:9 was for God, who is referred to in the text as "the Ancient of days," and that the other "throne" was "for David," because God had promised him that one of his male descendants would rule over Israel in perpetuity. Hence the editorial footnote to the word "David" in *Sanhedrin* 38b indicates that the writer refers to "The Messiah."¹²

The same Talmudic account goes on to say: "This is R. Akiba's view." R. Jose then sternly reprimanded Akiba for advocating that doctrine, and warned him to limit his study to the non-legal portion of ancient rabbinical literature.¹³

The supposed contradiction in the discussion between R. Johanan and the *Minim*, as mentioned above, is alleged because

the first part of Daniel 7:9 mentions “thrones” (plural), and the last part speaks of a “throne” (singular). That verse expressly states that the Ancient of days sat on one of them. R. Akiba, like some other teachers, held the view that the Messiah—the “one like unto a son of man”—occupied the other throne when he was ushered into the heavenly court. By saying that one of the thrones was for David, R. Akiba obviously meant King Messiah, a descendant and heir to King David’s throne in perpetuity. See Daniel 7:13,14.

R. Akiba b. Joseph believed that the Messiah, a descendant of King David, was the person described in Daniel 7 as “One like unto a son of man” (verse 13), and that there would be “given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.” Verse 14.

The vision of Daniel 7 was given to the seer in the first year of Belshazzar (verse 1), king of Babylon in the 6th century B.C.E. David, king of Israel, died about 971 B.C.E. It is inconceivable that R. Akiba thought that King David himself was the person referred to as the “one like unto a son of man” in verse 13 nearly five centuries later.

R. Akiba (born c. 50 C.E. and put to death about 132 C.E.) became a very prominent religious leader and teacher in Palestine. It has been said that “he, to a degree beyond any other, deserves to be called the father of rabbinical Judaism,” and that he was “the man who marked out a path for rabbinical Judaism for almost two thousand years.”¹⁴ He never abandoned his belief that the time had come for the Messiah to appear among men.¹⁵

At What Time?

Some important things foretold in the seventh chapter of the Book of Daniel were either ignored or overlooked by Akiba and his associates:

First, the great tribunal of judgment over which the Ancient

of days would preside (v. 10) as supreme Judge, is described as taking place *before* the King Messiah, portrayed as "one like unto a son of man," is given his promised kingdom and dominion over all the earth (vv. 13, 14).

Second, all the kingdoms of this world will be destroyed *before* the kingdom of the royal Messiah shall be established here, as foretold in Daniel.¹⁶ Only the "saints," the truly faithful among the professed people of God will be citizens in that future Messianic kingdom.¹⁷ This means that the righteous dead must be resurrected "to everlasting life" *before* that can happen.¹⁸

Another major mistake of Akiba and his colleagues was mainly two-fold: (1) Although correct in identifying the "one like unto a son of man" in Daniel 7:13 as the long-awaited royal Messiah, they erred concerning the *time* when his kingdom of glory on earth would be established, and what the course of human history would be *prior to* that climactic event. This is also the reason why many other false messiahs have appeared and failed since the time of R. Akiba and Bar Kokba. Also, they expected the Messiah to be a mere human military leader who would liberate his people from Roman domination and subject all the world to his dominion.¹⁹ Nowhere in the Sacred Writings has the Lord set a definitely fixed date for the establishment of the Messiah's kingdom of glory upon the earth.

(2) Akiba and some other leaders of Israel failed to note that the Messianic kingdom of glory would not be established upon earth until *after* the rise of the four great empires foretold in Daniel 7, the division of the fourth empire into 10 nations as represented by the 10 horns, and the rise of the oppressive religio-political power represented by the "little" (eleventh) horn, which would have sway for 1260 years.

Furthermore, R. Akiba and his colleagues failed to take into account the fact that those four great empires would rise and fall on earth *before* the establishment of the royal Messiah's kingdom of glory on Earth. Daniel the seer clearly put this on record in Holy Writ for all men to read.

Those four empires are: 1. Babylonia (605-539 B.C.E.);²⁰ 2. Medo-Persia (539-331 B.C.E.);²¹ 3. Greece under Alexander

the Great (331-323 B.C.E.),²² and divided into four lesser kingdoms (until 168 B.C.E.);²³ 4. Rome (168 B.C.E.-476 C.E.),²⁴ and divided into 10 lesser kingdoms (476 C.E. to the end of this present world).²⁵ Moreover, among the smaller kingdoms into which Rome would be divided there would arise another horn—a powerful “little” one—that would be a religio-political establishment which would persecute God’s people and think to change the divinely appointed times and laws. It would continue 1260 years.²⁶ This was papal Rome (538-1798, 1929 to the end).

In supposing that the royal Messiah’s kingdom would be established upon earth by Simeon Bar Kokba, a false messiah in 132-135 C.E., Akiba overlooked the fact that the dominion of Rome over the nations would be a long one before it would be divided into several lesser nations ere the royal Messiah should appear in glory and reign over the whole earth. Since Bar Kokba’s time many other false messiahs have arisen and failed because they, too, ignored what the prophets of ancient Israel had foretold concerning the future history of the world, especially the prophecies of Daniel the seer.

Messiah’s Preexistence in Daniel

Still another fact overlooked by Akiba and his colleagues is this. While the royal Messiah is depicted as “one like unto a son of man” in Daniel 7:13, he is not declared to be merely a man but a person “*like* unto a son of man.” In what sense is he different from the rest of us who inhabit this planet Earth? The Messiah is repeatedly declared by Holy Scriptures to be a pre-mundane person, and this doctrine was taught in ancient Israel, as shown in the previous chapters of this book. His preexistence dates from the days of eternity.²⁷ How he could be both a premundane Messiah and yet be “one like unto a son of man” is not explained in the Book of Daniel.

In what sense does Daniel 7 indicate the preexistence of the Messiah, as *The Jewish Encyclopedia* states in the second paragraph of this chapter? It does so on the premise that the

Messiah is prophetically pictured in verse 13 as “one like unto a son of man” coming to the Ancient of days in the heavenly tribunal *prior to* receiving his “dominion, and glory, and a kingdom” on earth. R Akiba, it appears, either ignored or overlooked three important things foretold in Daniel 7:9,10,13,14, which are these:

1. That the royal Messiah would not be given dominion, glory, and a kingdom on earth *until after* the close of the judgment session over which the Ancient of days was to preside;

2. That the Messiah would be present at that judgment session;

3. That he is prophetically pictured as coming with the clouds of heaven to that judicial assembly.

This indicates that *the Messiah existed prior to his coming to that heavenly tribunal* in judgment session, and there is in that particular prophecy no hint to indicate *how long* he had existed before his coming to it.

Daniel 7 does reveal that the Messiah, who is prophetically pictured as “one like unto a son of man,” is a celestial personage of very high rank and authority, and that he is enthroned in heaven as an associate with the Supreme Ruler of the universe.

The prophecy of Daniel 7 does not answer the question, *How long* did the Messiah exist *prior to* his coming in the clouds of heaven to participate in the judgment? The answer to this question has been provided elsewhere in the Sacred Scriptures penned by ancient Israel’s prophets. This we have already shown in the previous chapters of this book.

It is surprising to find in a modern Jewish reference work this remarkable statement penned for consideration in our 20th century:

The Messiah “is he who comes with the clouds of heaven. . . . The frequent expression, ‘The son of David shall only come’ (Sanh. 38a *et passim*), presupposes his abode in heaven, and the statement that the world exists only to delight him (and David and Moses) implies his preexistence (Sanh. 96b).²⁸ . . . (Before the sun was created his name was’; Sanh. 98c²⁸ and parallels), imply his origin and preexistence in heaven. He therefore stands

higher than the ministering angels (Yalk. ii. 476), and he lives throughout eternity.”²⁹

Footnotes and References

1. *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. 10, p. 183, col. 2, art. “Preexistence.”
2. Daniel 7:9,10,13,14.
3. Dr. Judah J. Slotki, *Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah*, p. 58.
4. *The Midrash on Psalms*, Ps. 2, sect. 9 (vol. 1, pp. 40,41).
5. *Ibid.*, Psalm 72, sect. 5 (vol. 1, p. 296).
6. For an amusing report of a rabbinical discussion in which the Messiah is referred to as “Bar Nafle” because he is pictured as coming “with the clouds of heaven” in Daniel 7:13, see BT *Sanhedrin* 96b and 97a (p. 654).
7. *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. 10, p. 183, col. 2.
8. R. Eleazar b. Azariah was a mishnaic scholar of the first century C.E., and senior of Akiba.
9. BT *Sanhedrin* 38b (p. 245).
10. BT *Hagigah* 14a, p. 84.
11. BT *Sanhedrin* 38b, p. 245. The same story is told in BT *Hagigah* 14a (pp. 83, 84).
12. BT *Sanhedrin* 38b (p. 245). See 2 Samuel 7:16,19; Psalms 89:36,37.
13. *Ibid.* See also Louis Finkelstein, *Akiba*, chap. 7, p. 195.
14. *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. 1, p. 304, col. 2, art. “Akiba.”
15. R. Akiba b. Joseph publicly proclaimed and endorsed Simeon bar Kokba as Israel’s promised Messiah, and the leader of the Jewish revolt against Rome in 132-135 C.E. Both men were slain by the Romans for that reason. Akiba mistakenly thought that Bar Kokba was the Messiah who would immediately liberate Israel from domination by pagan Rome. As a result of this revolt 580,000 Jews were slain (Dio Cassius, *Roman History*, book 69, chaps. 12-14, in LCL *Dio’s Roman History*, vol. 8, pp. 446-451), Jerusalem was literally razed to the ground by the order of Emperor Hadrian, and the place was made a Roman military base called Aelia Capitolina.
16. Daniel 2:34,35,44,45; 7:12-26.
17. Daniel 7:22,27.
18. Daniel 12:2. See also Ezekiel 37:12-26.
19. This is true also in the cases of several other men who claimed to be the long-awaited Messiah in the first and second centuries C.E., and who resorted to military might to achieve their ends.
20. Daniel 2:31,32,38; 5:30,31; 7:3,4,17.
21. Daniel 2:32,39; 5:24-28,30,31; 7:5,17; 8:3,4,6,7,20; 10:13,14; 11:2. The role of Cyrus as liberator of the Jews from Babylonian captivity was foretold before he was born (Isaiah 44:28; 45:1-4,13), and he was made cognizant of that fact, as seen in Ezra 1:1-8 and 2 Chronicles 36:22,23.
22. Daniel 2:32,39; 7:6,17; 8:5-8,21; 10:20; 11:2-4.
After the siege of Tyre in 332 B.C.E., Alexander the Great and his army passed through Palestine to Egypt. On the way he stopped at Jerusalem. “He went

- up to the temple, where he sacrificed to God under the direction of the high priest, and showed due honor to the priests and to the high priest himself. And, when the book of Daniel was shown to him, in which he had declared that one of the Greeks would destroy the empire of the Persians, he believed himself to be the one indicated.”—Josephus, *Antiquities*, book XI, chap. 8, sect. 5 (HUP vol. 6, page 477, lines 336 and 337).
23. Daniel 7:6; 8:8,22; 11:4f. Alexander the Great reigned over Greece until his death in 323 B.C.E. His kingdom was in the main divided into four lesser kingdoms: Macedonia, Thrace and the western part of Asia Minor, Syria and the countries eastward of the Indus River, and Egypt, as represented by the four heads of the symbolic leopard beast of Daniel 7 and the four horns of the he-goat of Daniel 8.
 24. Daniel 2:33,40; 7:7,17,19; 8:9-11,23-25; 9:24-27.
Josephus, the Jewish historian, wrote in the first century C.E.: “Daniel also wrote about the empire of the Romans and that Jerusalem would be taken by them and the temple laid waste.”—*Antiquities*, book 10, chap. 11, sect. 7 (HUP vol. 6, 276, page 311).
 25. Daniel 2:33,41-43; 7:7,20,24.
 26. Daniel 7:8,20-26; 8:12.
 27. Micah 5:1, Hebrew. See Chapter 3 of this book.
 28. The references to *Sanhedrin* 96b and 98c in this passage are incorrect. They should be 98b (p. 667 of the Soncino edition).
 29. *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. 10, page 184, col. 1, art. “Preexistence.”

CONCLUSION

DAVID the shepherd boy and "sweet singer of Israel"¹ grew up and became king over his people from 1011 to 971 B.C.E. In a psalm of praise to our Maker, he said, "In Thy light do we see light."² How true that is! For the path of the righteous is as the light of dawn, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."³

By the study of the Word of God given to ancient Israel in the Holy Scriptures, we have learned that God did not exist alone and in a vacuum during the eternity that preceded the creation of our little planet Earth approximately 6,000 years ago. We have been thrilled to find that when the Lord "laid the foundations of the earth,"⁴ "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy."⁵ This shows that other intelligent beings existed in the universe *before and when* our world was created.

Too, we have found that Israel's promised Messiah existed not only in God's thought and in name, but also in fact as a person *long before* God created the earth and man to inhabit it. Yes, "from the days of eternity,"⁶ he existed.

Thrilling also is the fact that this doctrine was anciently taught in Israel, and records of it have been preserved for thousands of years for us to read. In the previous chapters of this book we have shown that the targums, the Talmuds, the Midrash Rabbah, and other rabbinical works penned centuries ago bear abundant witness to that fact.

As we contemplate the world as it nears the close of the 20th century C.E., many wonder if we are entering into that "time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time."⁷ Until what time? It is said in verse 4: "But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to

the *time of the end*: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.”⁸

In our study of the subject of *Israel's Preexistent Messiah* we have found it made very clear in the writings of God's ancient prophets, and also often taught by many of Israel's religious teachers of post-Biblical times, that the Messiah existed *long before* the creation of our planet Earth, and that he occupies an exalted position far higher than that of the angels and other created beings. He is closely associated with, and is ranked next to, the Divine One who is called “the Ancient of Days” by Daniel the seer.⁹ Furthermore, he is referred to in Holy Writ as so great a celestial personality that he himself is sometimes called by the very names of deity.

Those Jews and others who were adherents of and active participants in the primitive Christian movement from its beginning in Palestine in the first half of the first century C.E. had in the writings of Moses and the other prophets of God a sound and solid basis for their belief in the preexistence of Israel's promised Messiah.

We thank and praise God that a glorious future lies ahead for our sin-plagued world. Sinful man has almost reached the point where, with the nuclear and other weapons that he has invented, the nations can be laid waste by the use of them, as we have seen demonstrated in the case of Nagasaki and Hiroshima, Japan during World War II. Our Creator has declared in no uncertain terms concerning our world that “He created it not a waste, He formed it to be inhabited.”¹⁰

The future and destiny of the planet on which we live have been committed by the Ancient of Days to the Messiah, the “one like unto a son of man.”¹¹ Let us loyally love and obey him, and be prepared to be among his subjects when he comes to establish his kingdom of glory in our world.

FOOTNOTES AND REFERENCES

1. 2 Samuel 23:1
2. Psalm 36:10.
3. Proverbs 4:18.
4. Job 38.4.
5. *Ibid*, verse 5.
6. Micah 5:1, Hebrew.
7. Daniel 12:1.
8. *Ibid*, verse 4.
9. Daniel 7:13.
10. Isaiah 45:18.
11. Daniel 7:13.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

WHAT DOES "MESSIAH" MEAN?

1. QUESTION: Is the term "Messiah" the Redeemer's proper name, or is it one of his titles?

ANSWER: It is primarily one of his titles. In Hebrew it is *Mashiach*, which means "anointed" (as an adjective) or "anointed one" (as a noun). In ancient Israel it was customary to anoint with oil a priest, a prophet, or a king when he was set apart for his ministry.

When the Hebrew text of the Holy Scriptures was translated into Greek by approximately 70 Jewish scholars for the Greek-speaking Jews at the request of Ptolemy II (Philadelphus) king of Egypt from 285 to 247 B.C.E., the Hebrew word *mashiach* was rendered as *christos*. Related to it is our English verb "christen."

In ancient Israel it was customary to anoint ceremonially with oil a person when appointing him to a sacred or public office of major importance. For example, Aaron and his sons were anointed for their work as priests by Moses as God commanded.¹ Elisha, when appointed to be a prophet, was anointed by Elijah at God's bidding.² Saul and David were both anointed by Samuel the prophet by the Lord's command to be kings of Israel.³ Two foreign kings are mentioned as being anointed.⁴

The term *maschiach* is used 39 times in the Hebrew text of the Sacred Scriptures. In a Jewish reference work the idea is well stated in these words: "Messiah (Hebr., 'Ha-Mashiah'; Aramaic, 'Meshiha' = 'anointed one'): The name or title of the ideal king of the Messianic age; used also without the article as

a proper name—‘Mashiah’ (in the Babylonian Talmud and in the midrash literature), like *Christos* in the Gospels. The Grecoized *Messias* of the New Testament (John i.41, iv. 25) is a transliteration of the Aramaic form, Aramaic being the spoken language of Palestine in the time of Jesus.”⁵

In some English versions of the Book of Daniel the translators render the Hebrew term as “Messiah” in Daniel 9:25,26.

A “CREATED” MESSIAH?

2. QUESTION: Some statements quoted in this book from Jewish sources refer to the Messiah as a person “created” or “born.” Where in the Holy Scriptures is it said that Israel’s preexistent Messiah is a “created” person, or one who is “born”?

ANSWER: The Holy Scriptures speak of the Messiah as a heavenly being who existed long *before* our world was created. We are not told precisely *when* his preexistence began. The same is true concerning God and the angels. The Lord has not deemed it essential for us to delve into that. Our world’s major problem now is sin, revolt against God and His law. The Messiah has a major role to play in solving it. Nowhere in Israel’s sacred writings is it said that the Messiah is merely a created being.

However, the Holy Scriptures do tell us that our preexistent Messiah would be born of a young human mother.⁶ That can be considered in a certain sense as a sort of creation. That is, he would become incarnate in human flesh by a miracle of God. We are not told precisely how that miracle would be accomplished. In fact, God has not revealed to us exactly how our world was created, or how He caused the earth to bring forth the animals after their kind,⁷ or how He caused the waters to swarm with living creatures, and fowl to fly in the air above the earth.⁸

He does not tell us how He made the first man (Adam) out of the dust of the earth, or how He could take a rib from Adam’s side and make of it a wife for him, to be the mother of all the rest of humanity. Neither of them had human parents. Nor does He explain how He can resurrect to life again the bodies of men

long after they have died and decayed into dust, or been eaten or swallowed by animals, or burned to ashes by fire. It would be folly for us to speculate about that.

The miracle of the resurrection of the decayed bodies of all who have died is, in a certain sense, a creation of preexistent human beings, some of them having died in infancy, and others after 900 years of life on earth. Thus the resurrection of the dead is a form of creation—in reality a re-creation of formerly existing persons who have died.

The incarnation of our preexistent Messiah in order that he might be a human being descended from King David by conception and gestation within a woman is a miracle not explained by God. It would be useless for us to speculate about how it could be done. In a sense our preexistent Messiah's incarnation would be a kind of creation, insofar as the formation of his human body in his mother's womb is concerned. This explains why he is referred to as "one like unto a son of man" in Daniel 7:13. How this was done is a mystery beyond our comprehension.

How our preexistent Messiah could be born of a young woman and without a human father, is not explained. This is one of many things revealed to us by our omnipotent God without explaining to us all the details of how He accomplishes them. He has given us ample evidence of His wisdom and power as a basis for trust in Him. No man can explain how eating a dish of food can produce hair in one part of his body, skin in another, blood vessels elsewhere, bones and toenails in still other places, etc. We accept the facts without a detailed explanation of how they came to be.

Israel's Holy Scriptures tell of many, many miracles wrought by God, and no attempt is made to explain to human minds how He did them. He simply tells us, His earthly children, to accept His word by faith and to love, trust, and serve Him.

A SON OF GOD?

3. QUESTION: In what sense is the Messiah a "son of God"?

ANSWER: There are various ways in which the expression “son of God” is used in the Sacred Scriptures. Here are some examples:

1. We have noted in the first chapter of this book that when God created our world “the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.”⁹ In this instance the persons so mentioned are called “the sons of God” because He, as their Creator, is their heavenly Parent.

2. In Job 1:6 and 2:1 we read “that the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them.” These “sons of God” are generally thought to be either holy angels or representatives of worlds loyal to God, their Creator and heavenly Father, like those mentioned in Job 38:7.

3. In the story of the Flood, which destroyed almost all of Earth’s inhabitants in the time of the patriarch Noah, we are told that “the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives, whomsoever they chose.”¹⁰ In this instance the men referred to were human beings. As a result of the murder of Abel by his brother Cain, the human race had become divided into two classes of people: (1) those loyal to God and (2) those who were rebellious against Him. Seth, the third son of Adam and Eve, followed the righteous example of his slain brother Abel in loyal devotion to God, while Cain and his descendants persisted in rebellion against Him. Hence it is written: “And to Seth, to him also there was born a son; and he called his name Enosh; then began men to call upon the name of the Lord.”¹¹ The Hebrew preposition here rendered as “upon” is very often rendered into English as “by.” Hence the passage may be properly interpreted as saying that “then began men to call *by* the name of the Lord.” That is, the descendants of Seth, because of their loyalty to their Creator, were called “sons of God” in contradistinction to the wicked descendants of Cain, who persisted in apostasy and rebellion against their Maker.

The descendants of Cain and Seth had greatly multiplied by the time of Noah, and there was intermingling and intermarriage

of the two classes in his day. The descendants of Cain were known as "sons of men" and those of Seth were called the "sons of God."¹²

4. In reference to Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel¹³ and his descendants collectively, God has said: "Israel is My son, My firstborn."¹⁴ However, Esau, the firstborn of Isaac and Rebekkah,¹⁵ because of his wickedness, forfeited the birthright blessing and privileges, and they were transferred by God to his brother Jacob.¹⁶

5. The Lord said also, "I am become a father to Israel, and Ephraim is My first-born."¹⁷ Ephraim, the younger son of Joseph, was designated by Jacob as the leader of the two brothers. The tribe of Ephraim became the leading one of the 10 that formed the northern Kingdom of Israel when Jeroboam I, a descendant of Ephraim, led the 10 tribes in revolt in 931 B.C.E.¹⁸ God was "a father to Israel" and Ephraim was His son, in the sense that He was their Creator and manifested a paternal care for them.

6. The concept of the Messiah as a son begotten by God was cherished in ancient Israel. It is recorded in the Babylonian Talmud: "Our Rabbis taught, the Holy One, blessed be He, will say to the Messiah, the son of David (May he reveal himself speedily in our days!), 'Ask of me anything, and I will give it to thee', as it is said, *I will tell of the decree etc. this day have I begotten thee, ask of me and I will give the nations for thy inheritance.* [Ps. 11, 7 and 8.]"¹⁹

Psalm 2 was penned by King David approximately a millennium before the Common Era. In a Midrashic treatise of long ago it is said, in comment on that psalm: "*I will tell of the decree: The Lord said unto me: Thou art My son . . . Ask of Me, and I will give the nations for thine inheritance, and the ends of the earth for thy possession* (Ps. 2:7,8). R. Yudan said: All these goodly promises are in the decree of the King, the King of kings, who will fulfill them for the lord Messiah."²⁰

Note that God speaks of the Messiah as His son, according to that Midrashic statement.

7. The Messiah is not the son of God in the sense that God

had a wife and by her begot a child-god. The preexistent Messiah became both the son of God and the son of man (a descendant of Adam and of King David), as the result of his miraculous incarnation in the womb of the virgin human mother, and was born of her without a human father, as foretold in Isaiah 7:14; 9:5,6. Thereby he became "one like unto a son of man." Daniel 7:13.

Adam and Eve, as well as the angels and inhabitants of other worlds, are "the sons of God" or "the children of God," because He is their Creator and, therefore, their Heavenly Father. Also the Lord repeatedly refers in Holy Writ to His people on earth as His children²¹ (literally in Hebrew, "sons"), and He speaks of Himself as their "Father."²²

The Messiah, as we have noted already in Chapter 4 and elsewhere in this book, existed long before his birth among men, even "from the days of eternity."²³ By such a miraculous incarnation and birth in human flesh, as foretold by Israel's ancient prophets, the preexistent Messiah would become "one like unto a son of man" and a descendant of King David. Therefore, as a member of the human race and King David's heir, he will ultimately occupy his throne when "the God of heaven" shall "set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people."²⁴

CHRISTIANITY A JEWISH MOVEMENT?

4. QUESTION: Dr. Joseph Klausner, a noted Jewish scholar, has said in his book *The Messianic Idea in Israel*, p. 529: "The Christian Messiah is in essence only a further development of the Jewish Messiah. For from Judaism Christianity received the ideas of redemption, the redeemer-Messiah, the Day of Judgement, and the kingdom of heaven." Is that statement true?

ANSWER: Yes. Dr. Klausner, though never a Christian, specialized in scholarly research on the Messianic doctrine in ancient Israel. He wrote a book entitled *Jesus of Nazareth*, in which he makes it very clear that Jesus himself was a Jew, and that the Christian movement was started by Jews among Jews in

Palestine in the early part of the first century C.E.

Josephus, the Jewish historian who lived there in the first century and personally witnessed the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E., mentions John the Baptist, Jesus, and other Christian teachers who were Jews.²⁵ Several Greek and Roman pagan historians also affirm that Jesus was a Jew, and that the Christian movement had its beginning among the Jews of Palestine.²⁶

Those primitive Christians based their religious faith on the Holy Scriptures given by God to Israel through Moses and the prophets. They taught that the Ten Commandments were God's unchangeable moral law. They observed the seventh day of the week as the Sabbath, and taught the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, the punishment of the wicked, and that the faithful will enjoy eternal life as citizens of the Messianic kingdom in the better world to come.

5. QUESTION: It is said: "Christianity is the system of religious truth based upon the belief that Jesus of Nazareth was the expected Messiah, or Christ, and that in him all the hopes and prophecies of Israel concerning the future have been fulfilled."²⁷ Is that true?

ANSWER: In part, yes. It is not true that Jesus and his followers taught that "in him ALL the hopes and prophecies of Israel concerning the future have been fulfilled." They knew and taught that many things foretold by ancient Israel's prophets were yet to be fulfilled in the distant future.

The Christian movement in the first century C.E. began as a Jewish one, and it continued to be mainly so for many years after the death of Jesus.²⁸ He and his twelve apostles were native Jews of Palestine. They based their religious teachings on the Holy Scriptures penned by Moses and the other prophets of Israel.

Some of the prophecies were fulfilled by Jesus as the Suffering Messiah, foretold by ancient Israel's seers. Other prophecies would be fulfilled by him when he, as the royal Messiah and scion of King David, shall establish his kingdom of glory in the then far-distant future—that is, in the sinless and better world

to come. This was foretold by the prophets before him.²⁹

See also in the New Testament Scriptures³⁰ what Jesus said about things that must yet take place before the Messianic Kingdom will be established upon earth.

In the main, Jesus' mission on earth nearly 2,000 years ago was to work out God's plan for solving the problem of sin, and making sure the recovery of repentant and willing persons from the guilt incurred by committing sin, and from the bondage of sinful propensities. That is why he explained to Pilate: "My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence."³¹

We need to repent of our evil deeds and sincerely seek pardon from our Creator, and we need His enabling, sanctifying power to overcome our inclination to evil. In order for us to live a sinless life in the endless world to come we must be sanctified here by the divine grace and power to fit us for citizenship in the Messianic Kingdom yet to come.

Because so many—among Jews and Gentiles—are unwilling to accept such divine salvation from sin (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:25-28) and so few desire to experience the change of heart and lifestyle essential for preparation for the better world to come, our merciful and gracious Creator has had to take a long time to fulfil His original purpose for the human race.

One of the leading teachers of the doctrine of Jesus in the first century, C.E. has put it this way: "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."³²

That is the way the Lord dealt with His people during the exodus from Egypt to the Promised Land when, because of the complaining and reluctance of so many of them to trust and obey Him, their journey lasted 40 years instead of two. After they had made and worshiped the golden calf at Sinai, with intention to return to bondage in Egypt, Israel's wonderful God "descended in the cloud, and stood with him [Moses] there, and

proclaimed the name of the Lord. And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed: 'The Lord, the Lord, God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth; keeping mercy unto the thousandth generation, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin; and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and fourth generation.' And Moses made haste, and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped."³³

Such was also, in essence, the merciful attitude and teaching of Jesus and his faithful followers, to both Jews and Gentiles. The manifold blessings which God bestowed on the patriarch Abraham and his descendants were to be shared by them with the rest of humanity.³⁴

It is still the Lord's plan that all of us who love and serve Him share His manifold blessings with others.

Footnotes and References

1. Exodus 28:41; 29:29; 30:30; 40:15.
2. 1 Kings 19:15,16.
3. 1 Samuel 9:16,17; 10:1.
4. 1 Kings 19:15,16; Isaiah 45:1.
5. *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. 8, page 505, col. 2, art. "Messiah."
6. Isaiah 7:14.
7. Genesis 1:24; 2:19.
8. Genesis 1:20.
9. Job 38:7.
10. Genesis 6:2.
11. Genesis 4:26.
12. Genesis 6:2.
13. Genesis 32:25-29.
14. Exodus 4:22.
15. Genesis 25:25.
16. Genesis 27.
17. Jeremiah 31:9.
18. 1 Kings 12:1-3,19,20.
19. BT *Sukkah* 52a (page 247).
20. *The Midrash on Psalms* 2:8 (vol. 1, p. 41).
21. Deuteronomy 14:1; Isaiah 63:8; Jeremiah 3:14; 10:20.
22. Isaiah 63:16; Jeremiah 3:19; Malachi 2:10; Psalm 103:13.

23. Micah 5:1, Hebrew.
24. Daniel 2:44; 7:14.
25. Josephus, *Antiquities*, Book 18, chap. 3, sect. 3; chap. 5, sect. 2; Book 20, chap. 9, sect. 1.
26. See Suetonius, *Lives of the Twelve Caesars*, "Claudius," chap. 25; "Nero," chap. 16; Tacitus, *Annals*, Book 15, chap. 44; Pliny the Younger, *Letters*, Book 10, Letters 97, 98.
27. *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. 4, p. 49, col. 2, art. "Christianity."
28. From historical and chronological data we find that Jesus, whose name in Hebrew means "Joshua" (in Aramaic "Jeshua"), died in the spring of 31 C.E. In the Babylonian Talmud we are told: "On the eve of the Passover Yeshu was hanged."—*Sanhedrin* 43a (p. 281). The editorial footnote to that passage says: "Ms. M. adds 'the Nazarean.' " That is in accord with the chronological data provided in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. He was hanged on a cross by crucifixion, when the Roman soldiers drove spikes through His hands and feet to fasten him to the cross. In that year the Feast of Passover (the 15th of Nisan) fell on the Sabbath, the seventh day of the week.
29. Psalm 37:8,9,29,34; Isaiah 65:17-25; 66:22,23; Ezekiel 37:1-14,21-28; Daniel 2:44; 7:14,27.
30. Matthew 24; 25:31-46; Mark 13:1-37; Luke 17:20-30; 21:5-36; John 14:1-3; Acts 1:6-11; 1 Corinthians 15:51-58.
John 18:36.
32. 2 Peter 3:9.
33. Exodus 34:5-8.
34. Genesis 12:3; 18:18; 22:18; 26:3,4; 28:14; 1 Kings 8:41-43; 2 Chronicles 6:32,33; Isaiah 56:2,6-8.

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